

# ADDRESS,

DELIVERED IN THE

CHAPEL OF JEFFERSON COLLEGE,

JULY 4th, 1842.

BY

PROF. A. B. BROWN.

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1842.

*Jefferson College, July 4th, 1842.*

REV. SIR:—

We have been appointed to return you the thanks of the SENIOR CLASS, at whose request you delivered the truly able and instructive Address, to which we have just listened; and to request a copy of the same for publication.

Yours Respectfully,

ULYSSES MERCUR,  
J. R. LOWRIE,  
ROBERT P. NEVIN.

TO PROF. A. B. BROWN.

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*Canonsburgh, July 5th, 1842.*

GENTLEMEN:

The Address of which you speak in such flattering terms, and which you are pleased to solicit for publication, was prepared and delivered at your request, and for your special benefit. It may therefore be regarded as your property. This consideration, together with a desire to gratify your wishes, induces me to submit it to your disposal.—Yours Respectfully,

A. B. BROWN.

To Messrs. MERCUR, LOWRIE AND NEVIN, }  
Com. Senior Class.

## A D D R E S S .

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It is my desire to render, if possible, our present interview, one not merely of momentary gratification, but also, of lasting profit to us all.

I feel confident, young Gentlemen, that you will not consider me as taking an unfair advantage of your courtesy, in inviting me to address you on this occasion, if I attempt to turn it to some good practical account. For this purpose, I invite you to consider, *in the first place*, some circumstances connected with the past history and present condition of our country, as appropriate grounds of satisfaction and thankfulness.

The recurrence of the day that gave us our national independence, should be hailed by every American with patriotic exultation and pious gratitude. This day has been set apart as a political Sabbath, in which, relinquishing our ordinary avocations, we should elevate our hearts in praise to **HIM**, by whose interposition our revolutionary struggle was brought to a happy issue, and our country put in possession of civil and religious freedom. It is proper that we should recur, on this occasion, to the history of the times and men of the revolution. That great event stands out prominently and singly on the page of history. It furnishes important lessons for the instruction and admonition—and bright examples for the admiration and imitation of mankind.

The motives by which it was prompted, and the principles by which it was conducted, were pure and honorable, and ought to be cherished by every American citizen.

Other nations, before and since, have struggled for liberty, and have displayed a high degree of courage and patriotism; but the fathers of our revolution were distinguished for the possession of a courage and patriotism directed by superior wisdom, and founded on virtuous principle. The military commanders of that day were like Cæsar,—brave and indefatigable; like him too, many of them were learned and eloquent,—skilful in wielding the pen as well as the sword; but they were not, like him, ambitious. Having secured the liberties of their country, they sheathed the victorious sword, and became illustrious examples of the peaceful and domestic virtues. The councils of that day were illumined by an effulgence of talent and patriotic virtue, which eclipses, by its superior lustre, the brightest records on the page of national history. Although the sages of the revolution rose mostly from private stations, yet they filled the high civil offices to which they were elevated, with the skill of experienced diplomatists, with the dignity of kings, and the magnanimity of heroes.

Amidst the bright galaxy which then appeared in our political firmament, one star of superior lustre arose—a star of the first magnitude—destined, as the central luminary, to bind the rest in harmony, that thus by their mingled radiance, they might guide the vessel of state through the storms of the revolution, and usher in the glorious day of liberty upon a benighted world. In other words—among the distinguished heroes and

sages of the revolution, most of whom were men of gigantic stature, both in intellect and virtue, WASHINGTON stands pre-eminent—like “the son of Kish, higher than any of his brethren, from his shoulders and upwards.” The character and conduct of Washington, in whatever light contemplated, claim our admiration and gratitude. He justly merits the honorable title which he has received, of “Pater patriæ;” and his virtues and counsels should be regarded by us with filial respect, and prized as an invaluable legacy. His character exhibits an assemblage of all those virtues which give worth, dignity and lustre to human nature. He was as much distinguished in the arts of peace, as in the science of war. Blameless in his life, pure in his morals, and elevated in his patriotism, he has left us an example which should never be forgotten. Washington, let it ever be remembered, was a christian; a man of faith and prayer; and *these* constituted his helmet and his shield in the day of battle.

While we contemplate the character of Washington and his illustrious compatriots, and render the tribute of gratitude and praise due to their deeds of valor in the field of danger, we should remember that we are indebted more to their virtues, than to their courage; that it was by moral more than by physical power, our country proved successful in achieving her independence.

To form a correct estimate of the American revolution, we must look to the motives that produced it. Taxation by the parent country was not the cause, but merely the occasion of that great struggle. The taxes imposed were not very oppressive, and could have been borne. It was against the principle involved

*the father of his country.*

in these acts, that our fathers contended. They saw in them the gradual and insidious advances of despotism. Many of these men had left their native land to escape from arbitrary power. All of them were imbued with an ardent love of liberty. They prized it for its own sake; because they believed it to be essential to the true dignity, glory and happiness of man; and because they regarded it as their inalienable right. They acted not merely for themselves, but for their children and their race. They well knew that the gentle encroachments of tyranny in one generation, would be a precedent for its unlimited exercise in the next. "*Obsta principiis*," was their maxim. Resistance to the very first appearance of this evil, they felt to be their duty. The great Hampden, whose name is identified with the cause of liberty, had set them a noble example in similar circumstances. This illustrious man, when an attack was made by an arbitrary government, upon the rights of his countrymen, intrepidly placed himself at their head, in the very face and across the path of Tyranny. He openly refused to pay taxes illegally imposed. Although the sum demanded was a mere trifle, yet the principle of the demand was despotism; and he determined to incur personal expense and danger in order to bring to a decision the controversy between the people and the crown.

In like manner and with similar views, our fathers resisted taxation by parliament, and refused submission to legislative acts in which they themselves could have no voice. The great principle which led to the revolution, did not then originate. It may be traced back to the first emigrants from Great Britain. These men

were not needy speculators, nor military adventurers. They were plain, humble, unoffending christians, who abandoned the altars and fire-sides of their fathers, because the hand of Tyranny had driven peace from the one and corrupted the worship of the other.

Yes—it should be remembered, that we are indebted, under God, for the seeds of liberty, the fruits of which we now enjoy, to that little band of Puritan worthies, who fled from the persecutions of England, and in 1620 landed upon Plymouth rock, and in this Western hemisphere, planted those pure political and moral principles in which we now rejoice. And it is worthy of being recorded, that the little company who thus fled with the ark of liberty to the free states of Holland and the freer forests of America, were all young men, the most of them between the age of 20 and 30 years. These were the men who conveyed to this land the precious germ, of which our government, with all its blessings, is but the expansion. They brought with them that political and religious creed which has since become the bulwark of our independence. It is not fate nor accident that has made our country what it is. Its present prosperous condition is the natural growth of seeds early sown. The great principle of the revolution was known to our fathers 200 years ago. They found it in the Bible, and felt its impulses in their own bosoms. The struggle of the revolution was only the expression of this inborn feeling; the assertion, the maintenance of this heaven-born principle. The success of that contest is to be attributed to the blessing of God upon the efforts of good men to secure the establishment of principles derived from

his word and intimately connected with his glory. And when we contemplate the happy results of that contest, we should be careful to recognize the agency of God, and render to him the glory due unto his name. It was his arm that brought salvation, and his righteousness that sustained us in that hour of conflict. It is true,—

"Patriots have toiled, and in our country's cause  
Bled nobly; and their deeds as they deserve  
Receive proud recompense."

But it should be remembered, that it was God who reared up and qualified the men that controlled the councils of the nation and led her armies to victory and independence. It should not be forgotten, that our nation derived her being, her government, and rules of administration, chiefly from the Bible; and owes her present prosperity to the fact, that God the Lord has been a wall of fire round about her.

While then, we survey the numerous and inestimable blessings which, as a nation, we enjoy, let our hearts swell with gratitude to Him from whom all blessings flow. What an interesting and sublime spectacle does our country exhibit! Here we behold a confederated government extending over an immense range of territory, embracing a large number of independent states, many of which might vie with some of the proud principalities of Europe. Our Western boundary has, like the visible horizon, receded as we have advanced, till at length the sun rises and sets in our own seas. Little more than half a century has elapsed since the revolution, and now, under the protection of those principles which it established, 18 millions of freemen repose in security—all speaking one language—all animated by



the same spirit of freedom and enterprise. Our commerce is second only to that of "the Mistress of the ocean;" and though separated widely from the seats of Transatlantic power, we command the respect of the whole European family of nations. Our floating flag affords an adequate protection in every sea and ocean of the globe. Judging from the history of the past, and by the light of sober, rational calculation, the future destiny of this country is perfectly amazing. If the population of the United States should continue to increase at its present rate, it will equal, in a century and a half, the present population of the globe!

God has done more for this, than for any other nation. He has wonderfully preserved us from those dreadful judgments which often desolate whole empires. While we have heard of wars and rumors of wars among the nations, we have enjoyed a long period of peace and tranquility. We are now at peace with all people, except a single, feeble, injured, domestic foe. No foreign enemy has, for a long time, invaded our land with hostile armies, besieging our cities, and spreading dismay, desolation and death all around. We have been mercifully exempted from the visitations of pestilences, earthquakes, famines, and other dreadful scourges of a guilty world. God has given us "rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." The physical condition of the mass of society in this country, is much more favorable than in any other. Labor is amply rewarded; so that the laboring man can not only command the means of comfortable subsistence, but also enjoy leisure for mental cultivation. This country

also presents peculiar inducements and facilities for intellectual development. The political institutions of other countries tend rather to retard than advance mental improvement. Here, in the absence of all legalized, hereditary barriers between the different classes of society, the poorest man has the opportunities and inducements to improve to the utmost, his own mind and the minds of his children. The system of common schools which obtains in many of the states, though liable to some objections and disadvantages, is nevertheless of vast importance in securing the general diffusion of intelligence.

It is worthy of remark, that the proportion of truly pious persons is greater in this, than in any other country; and notwithstanding the multiplicity of our religious sects, there exists among us a greater degree of good fellowship, than in any other nation. "There is no country in the whole world," says De Toqueville, "in which the christian religion retains a greater influence over the souls of men, than in America: and there can be no greater proof of its utility and of its conformity to human nature, than that its influence is most powerfully felt over the most enlightened and free nation of the earth."

Even in the chastisements with which God has visited us within the few last years, we may see abundant cause for gratitude. In the very judgments which he has executed on this nation, he has made himself known as a merciful as well as a jealous God. If ever chastisement was needed by any country, it was by ours. No curse could have been greater, than for God to have said of this nation, "Let her alone." Had he

not, in mercy, afflicted us in our pecuniary and commercial interests, and thus checked the raging fever of speculation, which had deranged and intoxicated the whole nation, our very prosperity would have destroyed us.

But let us consider *in the second place*, some of the circumstances in the present condition of our country, which are calculated to excite our apprehension. It is an old political maxim, that the first step of a nation is to conquest; conquest begets wealth; wealth produces luxury; luxury, corruption; and corruption, ruin. The path of time is strewed with wrecks of nations, of whose history this is a true epitome. The republics of ancient times rose in their beauty and might, with the most flattering prospects, but soon became the victims of corruption and fell to the dust. And we have reason to fear, that such may be our fate. If we compare the present with the past, it is obvious that we are not, as a people, carrying forward into the future, that amount of moral influence which the past conveyed to us. "This nation emerged from her revolutionary struggle with a common sentiment of union—an energy of moral principle—an amount of tried patriotism—a degree of public virtue—a respect for public authorities, and a prudent jealousy of division—which cannot be claimed for the present generation." We have now less general industry—more fraudulent speculation—more unprincipled aspirants after office—a more defamatory press, and more demoralizing elections; and these evils are greatly augmented by the flood of foreign population continually rolling in upon us.

In noticing more particularly some of the prominent evils and dangers of our country, I would direct your

attention, first, to the spirit of infidelity which is extensively prevalent. This spirit is no doubt lodged deeply in many minds, where it is not even suspected of having an existence. It results from the native atheism of the human heart, and finds much to nourish it in the state of society in our age and country. The growth of popular knowledge and free inquiry has doubtless contributed to promote it: for while sound knowledge is favorable to christianity, superficial knowledge tends to infidelity, because it conducts men to that point at which they see difficulties, without advancing them far enough to see through them. Superficial knowledge also induces intellectual pride, which is hostile to the high claims and humbling doctrines of the Gospel.—The popular and prevalent notions respecting liberty in this country, have probably contributed in many instances to promote infidelity, by leading men to imagine that they are not accountable for their belief. This has become a very common and popular sentiment, and has obtained greater currency in consequence of having received the sanction of many distinguished names. Every one has heard that celebrated distich of Pope:—

— "For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight;  
His can't be wrong, whose life is in the right."

Now, although a child might see the absurdity of a maxim which disjoins practice from principle, yet this pretty couplet acts as an opiate to the consciences of thousands, who employ it as a convenient and all-sufficient apology for their unreasonable ignorance and infidelity. This same sentiment was not long since proclaimed before a large number of young men in one of

the renowned Universities of Great Britain, and afterwards published to the world, as a wonderful discovery, by one of the most distinguished statesmen of the age; and it has met a most cordial and loud response on both sides of the Atlantic. Lord Brougham declares that a man has no more control over his belief, than over the hue of his skin or the height of his stature. He would thus destroy the foundation of all moral obligation, and render man wholly irresponsible both to his fellow-men and to his God.

From these and other causes, infidelity has come to prevail extensively in our country. If it were confined to the study of the philosopher, it would be comparatively harmless: but it pervades the mass of society, and aims to corrupt the rising generation. The press is continually augmenting the evil, by pouring forth floods of error and pollution in the form of newspapers, periodicals and novels. These impair the intellect,—pervert the judgment,—inflame the passions,—intoxicate the imagination and defile the heart.

Now, I trust that no one present will question the dangerous consequences of infidelity. I presume that you will all agree with the Father of our country in the opinion, that “morality and religion are indispensable supports to those dispositions and habits that lead to political prosperity.” We have sad reason to believe that infidelity is much more prevalent than is commonly supposed. It is essentially missionary, and is continually operating through a variety of agencies in every corner of the land. Let us not be ignorant of its devices.

2d. Another alarming indication existing in our

country, is the increasing desecration of the Sabbath. In a country like this, the Sabbath should be guarded with the most jealous care: its influences are essential to our safety and prosperity: it is the palladium of our civil as well as religious blessings: our destiny is linked with this institution. If honored and observed, the Sabbath will save the nation amid all dangers: if subverted, truth and righteousness, liberty and peace, will take their flight. The triumph of infidelity will be complete, and will be the precursor of anarchy and blood. We are already threatened with danger from this very quarter. Our government has declared war against this sacred institution, and enforces its violation. The contempt of the Sabbath is even a passport to popular favor; and the man who despises the Sabbath, is the man whom the people delight to honor. The high places of power and fashion, encouraged by the example of government, are throwing off their respect for the sanctity of the Sabbath, and transmitting the same spirit of impiety through all ranks of society. The restless spirit of the age is peculiarly hostile to the claims of the Sabbath; and the various forms of trade and active enterprise conspire to augment the danger. From these and other circumstances, the Sabbath has come to be regarded with much less respect than formerly: and in view of the prevalent desecration of this holy day, we may well tremble for our country. No secular advantages can compensate the loss of the benefits which the Sabbath secures.

3d. Another evil of wide extent and disastrous consequences, is the vice of intemperance. It is perhaps the most dangerous and ruinous vice that exists; for it

is often the prolific parent of all others. Its name is "Legion." By destroying the moral sensibilities, it prepares men for every deed of wickedness. Our poor-houses and prisons are crowded with its victims; and almost every capital offence is committed by its hands. It destroys property, health, reputation, conscience, and life—not only the life of the body, but of the soul. It is widely extended in its ravages, and indiscriminate in its operation. It already controls, to an alarming extent, the operation of the laws, by its influence upon public sentiment; and if not checked, it may utterly subvert our free institutions. Other governments have inherent power to restrain the progress of vice: ours has none. It depends upon the people; and if *they* become vicious, the government is gone. To a fearful extent this is even now the case. Intemperance, with its kindred vices, has overspread the land. From dependence on popular favor, our magistrates too often lend their countenance and aid, and license establishments to extend and perpetuate the evil. The voter is courted, because he is counted, whatever be his vices; and he is independent in his vices, because his own will creates his rulers. We have great reason, however, to rejoice in view of the salutary check that has recently been given to this formidable evil. And we entertain the hope that this nation will not always bear the unenviable title of "the nation of drunkards."

4th. Another evil of extensive prevalence and of most pernicious consequences upon individual character and social virtue and happiness, is licentiousness. Its tendency is to impair and destroy the most important of all our social institutions. To maintain inviolate

the sacredness of the marriage covenant, and the purity of the domestic relations, is indispensable to the best interests of society. Next to the church of God, the family institution is the most important organization in the world, without which the church and the world could not long exist. The morality, good order and happiness of a community will depend upon the legitimate operation of the domestic institution and the relations to which it gives rise. Without those influences which are enjoyed in a well-ordered family, no plants of purity can flourish—no flowers of virtue bloom. If licentiousness prevail here, it will be as a fatal disease at the heart, which will soon extend its ravages thro' every fibre of the body; a fountain of pollution and death, whose fatal streams will pervade every department of social life.

Where can be found a substitute for parental and filial affection,—for the support and moral education of the young? What influence can be secured, of equal efficacy to that of family government, for securing the decorum and decencies of life? The domestic affections, moreover, give rise to the love of country, and constitute essential elements of true patriotism. If we trace to their source those pleasurable feelings connected with the idea of country, we will find that they originate in the associations of home, and are strengthened and sweetened by the influence of the relations and affections of friendship and kindred. It is not the character of its climate, nor the fertility of its soil, nor the variety and grandeur of its scenery, nor even its civil and religious institutions, which chiefly bind our attachments to our country; but it is because



it is the land of our birth—the place of our home—the abode of the objects of our earliest and warmest love.

Now, what is the state of public sentiment in relation to this sacred institution? Is there attached to it generally that high importance, and that sacred regard paid to its relations and obligations which justly belong to it? Is sufficient care exercised to guard the purity of this hallowed fountain which God has formed for the preservation and happiness of man? Is there manifested a disposition in the community to frown upon every thing calculated to impair in the eyes of men the sanctity of this institution? Alas, is it not the fact that men, and women too, have been found publicly advocating principles subversive of all moral obligation, and all individual and social virtue; treating domestic purity with derision, and the marriage covenant as a relic of superstition? Is it not the fact that literature and talent, poetry and music, sculpture and painting, are often laid under contribution to corrupt the morals, and inflame the passions? What is the character and tendency of many of those books and newspapers and pictures which are scattered over the country, and eagerly grasped by all classes, especially by the young? Are they not licentious in their nature and influence, and yet, are they not forming the character of thousands of our youth of both sexes? Is it not the fact that such books as our mothers and grandmothers would not have read even in secret, may now be seen lying open on the tables of their daughters, who yet would be shocked at the slightest imputation on the delicacy of their minds or the purity of their morals? Is it not the fact that the indelicate and

impious works of the profligate and infidel Byron,) and of others of like character, but less genius, have supplanted in our parlors, the works of Milton, and Cowper, and Young, and others of this better class? We do not condemn indiscriminately all the popular publications of the present day. Many of them may, no doubt, be read with profit; but we believe that the majority of them are adapted to enfeeble the mind, and many of them to corrupt the heart. The wise defender of Innocence will strive to make her free from taint, in order that she may be free from danger. The subject now under consideration is one of vital interest. If the fountain be poisoned, death will flow in the stream. If the foundations be destroyed, what will be left to us of the fair fabric reared by our fathers, and cemented by their blood?

Let me entreat you, my young friends, to resist every temptation to sinful indulgence, and to cherish the domestic and social virtues and affections as long as you live; and let your patriotism be the expansion of your love of home.

"Domestic happiness, thou only bliss  
Of Paradise, that has survived the fall!  
Thou art not known where Pleasure is adored,  
That reeling goddess with the zoneless waist.  
Forsaking thee, what shipwreck have we made  
Of honor, dignity, and fair renown!"

5th. I mention as another existing evil, the vice of gaming. It is needless to describe the influence of this species of vice upon individual character, and social order and happiness. It is a practice fraudulent, base and cruel. Its invariable tendency is to destroy every element of virtue and happiness. The gambler is not

merely a drone in society, "natus consumere fruges," but while he lives upon it without rendering any equivalent, he inflicts a deadly wound upon its vital interests. Honest industry, intelligence and morality, always decline in proportion to the prevalence of this crime. Now, is there throughout the country a correct public sentiment on this subject? Is not this crime practised every where in open defiance of the laws that have been made to prevent it? Are not the interests of almost every community made to suffer by scenes of cruelty and crime, which owe their existence to the spirit of gambling? Why is this? Why is the press silent—or rather, why does the press speak approvingly of these things? Why are the laws powerless? Why is there no interference on the part of the magistrates? The reason is, that there is not sufficient moral power in public sentiment.

6th. In connection with this, I would mention as another evil of dangerous consequences, the general and shameful abuse of the elective franchise. Is it not to be feared that a large number of our citizens abuse this high privilege, and pervert it to the worst purposes? What is more common than for unprincipled demagogues to corrupt the ballot-box, by imposing on the ignorance, or exciting the prejudices and passions of men? How often do they influence the minds of the multitude, by exciting groundless fears or false hopes, and even by means of betting and bribery? It is believed that, in many instances, especially in our cities, a majority of the votes are controlled by means of this kind. In these circumstances, is there no danger that this privilege will become so perverted under the influ-

ence of designing men, as to destroy the liberties of our country?

7th. Closely connected with the evil just mentioned, and indeed the principal occasion of it, is the spirit of party—an evil of wide extent and dangerous tendency, in our country. It has been called the disease of republics; for it has invariably entered them and proved fatal. They are peculiarly open to its invasion, and afford the widest scope for its ravages. It has hitherto always existed in our country; but never has it appeared in a character so formidable as at the present time. It is essentially evil, and must prove a curse wherever it exists. It excites and fosters the worst principles and passions of the human heart. Let me urge you, my young friends, to guard against the influence of this mean, vile spirit; endeavor to fortify yourselves against its insidious arts. Aim to be independent. Stand alone, rather than go with the multitude to do evil. Seek to be like the beautiful portrait of Abdiel, drawn by the hand of Milton:

\* \* \* \* "Faithful found  
Among the faithless,—faithful only he;  
Among innumerable false, unmoved,  
Unshaken, unseduced, untterrified,  
His loyalty he kept, his love, his zeal;  
Nor number, nor example, with him wrought  
To swerve from truth or change his constant mind,  
Though single."

In order to be proof against the spirit of party, you must rise above the agitated region of clouds which it infects, and learn to breathe the pure atmosphere of truth, and to hold communion with the high and holy. In relation to all questions, let your motto be,—“In ne-

cessariis, unitas; in non necessariis, libertas; in omnibus, charitas."

8th. There is one other evil, which I cannot with propriety omit to notice on this occasion. It is one which, though local, is not the less a national evil and calamity. It has unhappily occasioned much bad excitement, on which account it is thought by many that it ought on no public occasion to be named aloud; and some would be willing to go even so far as to place an interdict upon the liberty of speech in relation to this subject. But it is equally idle and wicked to think of imposing any legal restraints upon the thoughts or lips of the people of this country. If *slavery* be an evil—a national evil,—then it is our privilege and duty calmly to look at it, and candidly and kindly to consult in reference to the best means of its removal. It is not my intention to advocate, at present, any favorite scheme. I am wedded to no particular project, and have none to recommend, or even to suggest. The subject is, to my mind, involved in deep darkness and difficulty. All that I now aim at, is to inspire you with that spirit of independence, which will lead you to contemplate this subject as you would any other, in all its aspects and consequences, and then to form an intelligent judgment and deliberate purpose respecting it. It is in vain for us to close our eyes to the subject; for it already forces itself, and will continue to force itself upon the attention of the nation. You might as well attempt to bind the Hellespont with chains, as to keep down the discussion of this subject. It involves questions which will be agitated, until they are finally settled.

Now, as you, my young friends, will be called to

take part in the discussion, and perhaps the ultimate decision of these exciting questions, I feel anxiously desirous that you should be prepared for the crisis. In regard to this, as well as every other subject, endeavor to free yourselves from the blinding influence of prejudice and passion; and whatever interest or inclination may prompt, let it be your first desire to know your duty, and your first purpose and act, to perform it:—"Fiat justitia, ruat cœlum."

We now proceed to inquire *in the third and last place*, whether there is any remedy for the evils that are found in our country. Must infidelity and vice extend and perpetuate their dominion over our population, and gain a complete triumph? Must all our civil and religious institutions be swept by the flood of error and iniquity? Must all we hold dear be sacrificed on the altar of ambition and lust, or bartered in the shambles of avarice? A grand and sublime experiment is in progress in this country—an experiment of incalculable importance to ourselves and the whole world—the experiment whether men are capable of self-government,—whether they can live permanently and peacefully under rulers of their own choice and laws of their own formation—or whether they are destined perpetually to vibrate between anarchy and despotism. In this experiment are involved some of the dearest hopes of the human race. If it fail, these hopes will be turned into despondency. The report of the awful catastrophe will be as the knell of death echoing over the nations. Our republic, now freighted with the precious hopes of the world, will then be a mighty wreck on the ocean of time! or like an island once fair

and inviting, now turned into desolation by earthquakes and volcanoes,—another Tenedos:

*"Insula dives opum Priami, dum regna manebant;  
Nunc tantum sinus, et statio malefida carinis."*

It is a truth confirmed by the experience of all nations and ages, that an ignorant and corrupt people cannot enjoy freedom. Ignorance and vice can be ruled only by the strong hand of despotism. Let an ignorant and vicious people attempt the experiment of self-government, and anarchy and violence will be the consequences. Hence the unsuccessful efforts to establish free governments in the Southern continent and in various parts of Europe. We have great reason to be thankful that our national independence has been maintained so long. But it becomes us still to regard our government in the light of an experiment, and not to be too confident of its ultimate success. If we consult history, we will find that nations, and republics too, have risen and flourished for a season, and then have perished. And although we believe that our government was originally based upon better principles than any one that has ever before existed, yet we also believe that she is not proof against corruption, and that if she ever so far forgets God, as to confide in learning, or wealth, or power, or wisdom, or political skill, then has begun her decline, and the sun of her glory and prosperity shall soon go out.

There are some who imagine that education, and the general diffusion of knowledge, will secure the permanence of our free institutions. Now, we would not depreciate the value of knowledge. Its diffusion is immensely important; but it is not all-sufficient. It is

a power that is often misapplied and misdirected. It is a useful weapon in the hands of Virtue; but otherwise it is a dreadful curse. Its influence depends upon the character and intentions of the agent who wields it. No spectacle can be more melancholy and fearful than that of a powerful and well educated mind, bent on purposes of mischief. Mere knowledge cannot control the will, nor regulate the affections and passions.— Learning alone cannot change the heart.

The popular idea that universal intelligence will secure universal peace and prosperity, is not only unscriptural and unphilosophical, but contrary to historical fact. Look, for example, at Athens. There we see the insufficiency of intellectual cultivation to sustain morality and liberty. Athens was the eye of Greece—the University of the world! She had an almost perfect system of intellectual education. There, every scene, every edifice, was an impressive exhibition of elegance and erudition. There, was the venerable grove in which Plato unfolded his sublime mysteries. There, the Lyceum in which Aristotle anatomized the springs of human intellect and action. There, the stately porch of Zeno; and there, the garden of Epicurus. There, were the monuments of every thing great and glorious, dignified and refined. There, were libraries, scientific lectures, and unrivalled schools of philosophy, in which the most distinguished sages were the teachers.

Now, what was the consequence? Did learning make the Athenians virtuous, and secure their liberties? No. They were a very vicious, profligate people. Gambling, drunkenness, and all forms of licentiousness prevailed, and increased with the growth of knowledge



and refinement. Even many of her philosophers themselves, were the victims and abettors of vice.

If we turn to Rome, we will find that her best days were her earlier days, when science had not so much as dawned upon her; and that when she attained her highest degree of intellectual cultivation, then her morality declined, and her liberty perished. Both in Greece and Rome, the period of morality and liberty was the period of comparatively little intellectual cultivation; while knowledge, crime, and political insecurity, are found to have been co-eval.

Again: Look at France. Was ignorance the cause of the horrors, cruelties and crimes of her revolution? Had science and literature been previously annihilated in that country? No. The period preceding that terrible catastrophe has been called, by way of eminence, "the Augustan age of France!" The arts and sciences flourished, and literature was patronized, and yet liberty was crushed. Why did not knowledge prevent that revolution, or at least, its excesses? Why did not knowledge and refinement curb the storm of human passion, and control the violence of national anarchy? Ah! "Leviathan is not thus tamed."

It is vain to depend upon the general intelligence of the people, as an effectual security for civil liberty. Intelligence must be controlled by moral principle, to be of any avail; and this must be based upon religion. Without the belief of religious truth, it can have no existence; and without the sanction of religion it can have no efficacy. And by religion, we mean the religion of christianity. It is this alone that can purify

the heart—curb the violence of passion—restrain from vicious indulgence, and lead to the practice of virtue.

But while some look to the influence of general education, as the means of preserving our free institutions, there are others who confide chiefly in the power of the laws, for securing this end. Now it is impossible, under any form of government, for the laws to exercise any other than a partial and negative influence. Laws are external. They cannot reach the secret springs of action in the heart. They may partially suppress, but cannot extinguish the unhallowed fires that burn within. They only take cognizance of a few overt offences, which they seek to restrain by penalties that have no salutary influence upon the character of the culprit.

Besides, human virtue does not consist in conduct produced by the mere fear of penal inflictions; but it consists of feelings and actions, which human laws are neither competent nor intended to govern; and which it is the prerogative of religion alone, to generate, to foster and to diffuse.

The influence of laws, then, must always be very limited. But in a government like ours, where the people make the laws—where they depend for their existence and enforcement, upon the will of the people, no idea can be more preposterous, than that of trusting to the laws for the protection of our rights and liberties against the dangers that may arise to threaten their destruction.

Our government is entirely destitute of inherent strength. It is wholly dependent upon the will of the people. This is its basis—this its animating spirit—its very life. This is the power that moves its machinery,

that controls its operations. As the stream cannot rise higher than its fountain, so the measures of our government in regard to their moral character, can never rise higher than the source from which they emanate—the will of the people—without the application of a power foreign to the genius of our government. Whenever a majority of the people become corrupt, they have the power in their hands, and no laws can be expected to emanate from them, which will condemn the practices in which they delight.

It is obvious, then, that our only sure expedient is to promote and preserve moral purity among the people. But to what influence shall we look for preserving that general morality which alone can sustain our free institutions? We have seen that it is not to be found in any system of mere intellectual education; nor in any system of human legislation. Our schools of learning and halls of science and courts of justice tell us, that it is not in them. Is it in the freedom of the press? Alas, both the political and religious press are at present too much under the control of cupidity and party-spirit, to promise the influence which is needed. Is there, then, no redeeming influence,—no conservative power?—There is! We hail it from heaven; it has come down from the throne of God; it is the law of God—the influence of gospel-truth. Nothing but this can ever secure to us that pervasion of pure principles which is indispensable to the permanence of our civil institutions. The principles of the Bible must not only be transcribed upon our statute-books, but upon the hearts of the people. These alone can prepare men for self-government.

“It is to the principles of christianity,” says Hume himself, “transmitted by the Puritan fathers, that the world is indebted for any rational liberty which exists on earth.” We have nothing on which to rely with safety, but the institutions of Christ, and the pure spirit of the gospel of Christ. This is the last, the only hope of our country and the world. “Salvation belongeth unto the Lord;” and this salvation is extended through the instrumentalities of moral power which he has ordained for the purpose. The gospel, accompanied by the promised influences of the divine Spirit, will exert a controlling, transforming, purifying influence upon the hearts of men; and in this way alone can they become qualified for self-government. The gospel, if allowed to exert its appropriate influence, would make us permanently free and happy. Its benign influence would be “as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion, where the Lord commanded his blessing, even life for evermore.” This then, is our hope. If our country is saved, the gospel must be more widely extended, and be accompanied with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. We therefore call upon all who feel an interest in the future destinies of the nation, to maintain and extend the purifying spirit of the gospel. We call upon you especially, young men, “because ye are strong,” and because to you will soon be entrusted the interests of the nation. We call upon you to be faithful to your trust—to do your duty. Endeavor, by your example and influence, to raise the tone of moral sentiment. Wherever you see vice, frown upon it, and let virtue always receive your countenance and support. If you thus succeed in

stemming the torrent of iniquity, future generations will rise up and call you blessed. And let me beseech all to pray for divine influence upon our land. If God pours out his Spirit, then all will be gained. Our country will become the garden of the Lord. "The Gentiles shall see her righteousness and all kings her glory. She shall be a crown of glory in the hands of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of our God." Let us not then despair of the permanent prosperity of our country; but let us encourage ourselves in the Lord our God. Let us rejoice, that amid all the clouds of danger and guilt that darken our political prospects, the star of hope and the rainbow of promise may still be seen faintly gilding our country's horizon. Let us then take encouragement to put forth our efforts to save our beloved country. Let our hope and prayer respecting her ever be, "*Esto perpetua.*" Then, if she is saved, it will be a sufficient reward for all our exertions and sacrifices, to be permitted to witness her rising prosperity, and to mingle in the rejoicings of her glorious jubilee. If, on the other hand, the dark cloud of adversity should gather over her, and deluge all her dearest hopes, we shall have the consolation that, away from this tempestuous state of human things, and beyond the storms of life's tumultuous ocean, there is another country, where, as fellow-citizens, we may meet and mingle our hallelujahs for ever and ever.

Sustained and animated by such a prospect, we shall rise superior to the fear of danger and of death. Then, through whatever scenes of adversity we may be called to pass, we can say—

"*Per varios casus, per tot discrimina rerum,  
Tendimus in cælum, ubi Deus sedes quietas,  
Ostendit.*"

But while we this day rejoice in the experience of such rich and numerous blessings, and seek and pray for the prosperity of our country, let us not overlook the claims of a benighted world. Let us resolve to labor and pray for the extension of our civil and religious privileges over all the earth. This is the grandest, noblest enterprise, that can enlist your feelings and energies. The whole world is to be brought under the dominion of the gospel. This is to be accomplished by human instrumentality. Immanuel has erected his standard, and is mustering his forces for war. This is the day of his power. Let us all be found willingly consecrating ourselves to his service; and let us resolve that "for Zion's sake we will not hold our peace, and for Jerusalem's sake we will not rest until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth; and until the kingdoms of this world shall have become the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ."

"Come then, and added to thy many crowns,  
Receive yet one, the crown of all the earth;  
Thou who alone art worthy! Thine it was  
By ancient covenant, ere Nature's birth;  
And thou hast made it thine by purchase since,  
And overpaid its value with thy blood."